

Sebelius, Jim Messina, Phil Schilliro, Shawn Maher, and Dana Singiser.

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, let me say this to the minority staff as well. While we have disagreed, and while they didn't vote for the bill, there are people I admire immensely on the minority staff. On our committee, there were wonderful suggestions and contributions that came from the Republican side of the aisle. While they didn't support the bill, I think they made it a better bill because of their contributions. I want to add their names as well. MIKE ENZI of Wyoming, the ranking member—and I worked with every Republican minority member of the HELP Committee—offered amendments that were included. While they may not want to admit it or acknowledge it, they made a contribution to this bill that makes it stronger and a better piece of legislation. I add their names as well for their efforts.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO BARBARA A. SOULIOTIS

Mr. KIRK. Mr. President, I know all my colleagues share an indebtedness to the many staff members who work so (skillfully and) tirelessly behind the scenes each day. They assist us in serving the public and responding to the needs of our constituents. Today, I am honored to pay particular tribute to the contributions of one truly outstanding member of the Senate staff. She will retire at the end of this session of Congress after 47 years of impressive service to the citizens of Massachusetts.

Barbara Souliotis worked on Senator Edward M. Kennedy's first campaign for the Senate in 1962. She was the first employee in Senator Kennedy's office in November of that year. And from the moment he joined this body until the end of his life, Barbara served as a member of his staff and for the last 23 years, she was the State director of his Boston office.

"Barbs" recalls that on her first day at work here in Washington, she spilled a glass of Coca Cola on Senator Kennedy. When she started to apologize, he smiled his iconic smile and said "Barbara, you and I are going to get along just fine."

And they did. She served him brilliantly throughout his entire Senate career—the only member to run the full race as a "staffer", though many of us have reported back in whenever Barbara sent out the call.

Senator Kennedy considered "Barbs" to be his most indispensable assistant. If anyone ever had a question relating

to the Massachusetts people whom he loved, he would inevitably ask; "Have you checked with Barbs?" I know how proud Ted would be that this tribute honoring Barbara's extraordinary example of public service to our Senate, our Commonwealth and our country is taking place this day.

I first met Barbara Souliotis when I joined Senator Kennedy's staff in 1969—40 years ago. I could see right away that behind Barbara's modest demeanor was a remarkable woman who would never let Senator Kennedy down. Why?

Because she had learned that his values and his commitment to making a positive difference in peoples lives was the very reason she wanted to work for him in the first place. As I have thought about public service through the years, it has become clear that the best of our Nation was built on the labors of loyalty and love of unsung public heroines like Barbara Souliotis.

It was once said that "Loyalty means nothing unless it has at its heart—the absolute principle of self sacrifice". If that is the standard of loyalty, I can tell you this,—there is no more loyal United States Senate staffer than Senator Kennedy's own "Barbara Souliotis".

She embodies the admirable quality of loyalty no matter the circumstances. Barbs planned to retire years ago, but her loyalty to Senator Kennedy and her leadership position on his staff kept her with him to the end. Just as she had throughout his storied career, she worked unfailingly for Senator Kennedy through the difficult months of his illness and during his final days.

After Senator Kennedy passed away in August, Barbara continued her remarkable life's work of service as the director of my Boston office. This woman I had known as a colleague came, once again, to the aid of a friend. As one who was appointed to, among other things, continue constituent services for the people of Massachusetts, I knew I could keep that pledge—because Barbara Souliotis volunteered to stay on to lead the Kennedy team during these last few months.

Barb's loyalty, integrity and commitment are legendary. She is the true noble public servant, the tireless and compassionate friend, the unassuming aid to all around her.

If public service is Barb's vocation, sports is her avocation. There is no more avid fan of the Boston Red Sox, the Boston Bruins, the Boston Celtics, and the New England Patriots than Barbara Souliotis.

And she's also an outstanding golfer who plays without a handicap and who has at least one hole-in-one on her score card. In Massachusetts, sports and politics are our passion. And Barbs has scored literally thousands of holes-in-one for the constituents of Massachusetts. A lifelong resident of Haverhill, she has travelled tens of thousands of miles through the years serving the people of our Commonwealth.

In acknowledging Barbara's years of All-Star service to Senator Kennedy for 47 years and to me for these few important and historic months, I add my own personal heartfelt thanks to her, especially for the blessings of her friendship, support, and counsel over the many decades, and I wish her a well-deserved happy and healthy retirement in the many years to come. Thank you, Barbs. We love you. Hit 'em long and hit 'em straight!

NOMINATION OF ERROLL SOUTHERS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it is only fitting that during this travel-heavy holiday season, we urge our colleagues on the other side of the aisle to work with us in confirming the nomination of Erroll Southers as Assistant Secretary for the Transportation Security Administration.

The Transportation Security Administration is tasked with ensuring the security and safety of travelers using our transportation network. Most often associated with security at airports, TSA responsibilities also include highway, rail, port, bus, and mass transit security. The agency grew out of the aftermath of 9/11, a somber reminder of the need for vigilant attention to transportation security.

Erroll Southers is the chief of homeland security and intelligence for the Los Angeles International Airport police force. He is ready for this job. He has nearly three decades working in public safety, homeland security, and intelligence. Chief Southers has worked as a Santa Monica police officer, special agent for the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and as a top officer with the Los Angeles International Airport, assisting in the management of the largest U.S. airport police force.

Unfortunately, without Chief Southers in the position he has been nominated to, TSA is without the leadership necessary to move forward. The President nominated Chief Southers in September, and the nomination has been reported favorably to the Senate by both the Homeland Security and Commerce Committees, it is being held up by Senate Republicans.

At the same time Senate Republicans are insisting on expanding the role and responsibility of TSA by requiring guns to be allowed on Amtrak, they block and delay the permanent leadership necessary to implement these new policies.

And what is the justification for delaying Chief Southers' confirmation? It is not his qualifications, his past actions or experience. These are generally accepted to be outstanding. No, it is instead an unreasonable demand that he predetermine if TSA employees should be allowed to form unions. Instead of bending to political pressure, Chief Southers has taken the stance that this decision should be made with the input of all stakeholders, using